

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action mailed March 21, 2005.

Reconsideration of this application in view of the below remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-7, 9-14 and 16-22 are pending in the application with Claims 2, 9 and 16 being in independent form. By the present amendment, Claims 2, 9 and 16 have been amended. No new matter or issues have been introduced into the disclosure by way of the present amendment.

I. Rejection of Claims 2, 9 and 16 Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

Claims 2, 9 and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter, which Applicant regards as the invention. The Examiner requests clarification of the “balance amount reducing means”, “verifying means”, and “amount increasing means”. Claims 2, 9 and 16 have been amended in a manner believed to clarify the above-mentioned elements. Specifically, Claim 2, and similarly Claims 9 and 16, recites in part:

a balance amount reducing means for reducing said prepaid amount of said debit means by said value or cost of said electronic revenue stamp if said electronic revenue stamp is issued; a verifying means that is part of the stamp issuing apparatus, for receiving a digital certificate for making an electronic revenue stamp invalid, said digital certificate containing a digital signature of said receiver, and verifying whether said digital certificate is valid or not by using an identifier of said receiver and without communication with a data center; an amount increasing means for increasing said prepaid amount by an amount equal to the value or cost of said invalidated electronic revenue stamp

II. Rejection of Claims 2-7, 9-14 and 16-22 Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 2-7, 9-14, and 16-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) for allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,285,990 issued to Lee et al. (hereinafter, “Lee et al.”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,058,384 issued to Pierce et al. (hereinafter, “Pierce ‘384”) and U.S. Patent No. 6,427,139 issued to Perry A. Pierce (hereinafter, “Pierce ‘139”). The Examiner-cited references teach electronic postage stamp systems, however the prior art references fail to disclose or suggest a means of invalidating an electronic stamp using a verifying means for verifying an issued invalidation certificate and an amount increasing means for crediting the value or cost of the invalidated electronic stamp back to the prepaid amount.

Specifically, Examiner concedes that Lee et al. fails to teach a verifying means that is part of the stamp issuing apparatus and performs the verification without communication with a data center, an amount increasing means for increasing the prepaid amount, and an invalid electronic stamp recording means for recording a digital certificate making an electronic revenue stamp invalid.

Pierce ‘384 fails to overcome the deficiencies mentioned above. In particular, FIG. 2 clearly shows a data center performing a significant portion of the verification steps, namely steps 105, 115, 120, 130, 135, 140 and 145. Therefore, Pierce ‘384 can not properly be interpreted as disclosing or suggesting a verification means that is part of the stamp issuing apparatus, and which performs the verification without communication with a data center, as communication clearly occurs in Pierce ‘384 between steps 100 and 105, 105 and 110, 110 and 115, 120 and 125, 125 and 130, and 145 and 150.

Additionally, Pierce ‘139 clearly requires its disclosed postage refund element 31 to be scanned and verified at the postal authority, which could be thought of as a data center, and thus requiring communication with a data center for completion of the verification. (See: Pierce ‘139

col. 4, lines 45-67 and col. 5, lines 37-51). Therefore, Lee et al., Pierce '384 and Pierce '139, taken alone or in any proper combination, fail to disclose or suggest the verification means as recited in Claims 2, 9 and 16, thus Claims 2, 9 and 16 are believed patentably distinct and allowable over the cited prior art references. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejection with respect to Claims 2, 9 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Lee et al. in view of Pierce '384 and further in view of Pierce '139.

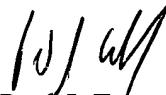
Claims 3-7, 10-14 and 17-22 are dependent from Independent Claims 2, 9 and 16, and thus are limited by the language recited by these independent claims. Therefore, for at least the reasons given above with respect to Claims 2, 9 and 16, Claims 3-7, 10-14 and 17-22 are believed patentably distinct and allowable over the cited prior art references. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejection with respect to Claims 3-7, 10-14 and 17-22 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Lee et al. in view of Pierce '384 and further in view of Pierce '139.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all claims presently pending in the application, namely, Claims 2-7, 9-14 and 16-22 are believed to be in condition for allowance and patentably distinguishable over the art of record.

If the Examiner should have any questions concerning this communication or feels that an interview would be helpful, the Examiner is requested to call Applicant's undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,



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